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Exile, Refuge and the Greek Polis: Between Justice and Humanity¹

Abstract

This paper addresses the place of exiles and refugees in the Greek poleis (city-states), with a focus on the later Classical and Hellenistic periods (c. 400–100 BC). It examines the different forms of protection and aid granted by Greek poleis and their citizens to people displaced through war and civil strife. Its main focus is the range of arguments and ideals advanced by ancient Greeks as grounds for granting these forms of protection and aid to exiles and refugees. Displaced Greeks and their hosts could, for example, present aid to displaced groups as guided or inspired by justice, law, freedom and shared Greek identity. Alternatively, in a move which became increasingly prominent in formal political contexts in the period considered here, they could present help to the displaced principally as a matter of respecting unconditional ethical ties binding together all humans, or all ‘citizens of the world’. This paper argues that the diverse range of relevant Greek practices and values both reflected and helped to shape complex and shifting ancient Greek ideas about the city, citizenship, democracy, justice, freedom, virtue and gender. Throughout its argument, the paper draws connections and contrasts between ancient Greek and modern liberal practices and ideology, and their underpinnings in broader ethical and political ideals. Modern liberal practices and values concerning aid to refugees draw on, and combine, the approaches and traditions evident in the ancient Greek world, as well as diverging from them in revealing ways.

1. Introduction

Exiles and refugees were very prominent in the world of the ancient Greek city-states.² This paper takes as its focus the values, ideologies and debates through which the ancient Greeks of the cities addressed the issue of refuge, hospitality and aid to displaced outsiders. It pays particular attention to three ideals which came to prominence in ancient Greek debates about when and how to grant refuge and asylum to displaced people, which continue now to shape Western debates about refugees.

The first ideal discussed here is what may be called ‘humanitarianism’. There is no doubt that the philosophy and practice of humanitarianism have taken on in the modern world many features and nuances which are not remotely applicable to ancient Greece. Nonetheless, the ancient Greeks did have a clear notion of the basic, unifying ideal essential to different forms of humanitarianism: the ideal of equal, unconditional compassionate concern for all fellow humans as humans, which should be put into practice, wherever possible, to alleviate severe human suffering or deprivation. Because this ideal calls on all humans to take a consistent approach to all fellow humans, it can be described as ‘universalist’, as well as ‘humanitarian’.

In Greek thinking, this ethical ideal was often closely connected with the virtue of ‘humanity’ or ‘love of humanity’ (*philanthropia* in Greek). Ancient Greeks certainly did sometimes focus on kinds of *philanthropia* exercised within particular, bounded communities and relationships. The philosopher Aristotle, however, extrapolating from the ethical culture of his time, explicitly identified *philanthropia* as the virtue through which humans act on the solidarity which exists between them all automatically as members of the same species.³ According to the conception captured by Aristotle, *philanthropia* should rightly be directed equally⁴ at all human creatures, by virtue of their humanity, in keeping with the basic humanitarian ideal

defined here. The question of who qualifies as a ‘human’, and thus for humanitarian aid, could be contentious in the ancient world, as in the modern: consider Aristotle’s famous view of slaves as tools, similar to animals.⁵ Nonetheless, as will be evident in sections 5 and 7 below, ancient Greeks often also adopted more expansive views of ‘humanity’, explicitly including women and slaves among the legitimate beneficiaries of *philanthropia*. Moreover, as will be seen later in the next section, the humanitarian ideal of equal compassionate concern for all fellow humans, which must be exercised when confronted with humans in severe need, was embodied in some ancient Greek institutions and practices, especially some religious rituals.

The second ideal investigated in this paper is what can be called, for convenience, the ideal of the ‘state of refuge’ or ‘city of refuge’.⁶ This is a more political ideal: the good city should be particularly concerned with protecting and supporting particular displaced people, as a way of defending and promoting a specific set of interconnected values and interests. As well as being more political, this ideal has the most substantial overlap with more prudential and realist approaches to refuge: approaches which treat it as expedient for the well-run city to grant refuge to certain displaced people, in order to reward past services and create incentives for new ones.

The third ideal discussed here is that of cosmopolitanism. Again, it is important to bear in mind that cosmopolitan philosophy and practices have changed radically since ancient Greek thinkers discussed them. Nonetheless, ancient and modern cosmopolitanism, like ancient and modern humanitarianism, can be seen to share a basic, unifying ideal. In the case of cosmopolitanism, that unifying ideal is the ideal of a type of citizenship and civic equality which cuts across borders of status and territory, such that hosts have political duties to fellow cosmopolitans in difficulty. These political duties go beyond requirements of humane sympathy and alleviation of severe suffering, to include the more substantial kinds of solidarity and interaction characteristic of fellow citizens.

I argue that these different ideals interacted in a very complex way in ancient Greek debates about exiles and refugees: they were often mainly rivals and opposites, rather than complementary ideals. Indeed, ancient Greek responses to the displaced reveal much about the complexities and internal tensions, much debated by modern historians, of ancient Greek city-states’ political ideologies, especially concerning citizenship, political belonging and outsiders.⁷

The focus here on ideals, ideology and discourse might be thought not to do justice to more practical questions about aid to exiles and refugees in ancient Greece, which are certainly worthy of further study.⁸ Needless to say, Greek cities did not always live up to the ideals of refugee aid they themselves promoted. As will be seen a few times in the discussion, those ideals themselves were probably often exploited to conceal, or dress up, the self-interest of individuals and whole cities. Nonetheless, those ideals are worth studying in depth, not merely as revealing intellectual or theoretical experiments, but also as important influences and constraints on ancient Greeks’ behaviour towards refugees: in most societies, those professing particular ideals must at least take them into account in their decision-making, even if only to ensure their conduct at least appears to conform with them.⁹

Indeed, in this particular case-study, values and ideals concerning asylum and aid certainly helped to define the basic parameters of citizens’ practical interaction with displaced outsiders. This was due to a phenomenon familiar from other parts of this volume.¹⁰ Namely, relevant

ideals and debates themselves helped to shape the different Greek categories and stereotypes of the exile and refugee, partly reflected in complex and rich Greek terminology:¹¹ for example, contrasting Greek views of forced migrants as more self-confident political exiles or fugitives (*phygades*, *pheugontes*) or as more obviously helpless ‘wanderers’ (*planomenoi*), ‘suppliants’ (*hiketai* or *hiketeuontes*), ‘displaced people’ (*ekpiptontes*, *ekpesontes*) or ‘expellees’ (*ekballomenoi*, *ekblethentes*).¹² Cities did not merely encounter certain types of forced migrant, but actively helped to shape the status, identities and behaviour of the displaced Greeks who reached their territory, who in turn helped to determine the development of local civic life.

The diversity of Greek vocabulary to describe displaced people reflected the complex range of processes which could lead to displacement in the ancient Greek world. Individuals could be sentenced to exile or outlawry as a punishment. It is usually hard to trace the subsequent lifestyles of individuals exiled in this way, including their treatment by hosts. There is much more plentiful evidence for the lifestyles, and reception in new cities, of Greeks expelled in groups, usually as a result of war or civil war. This paper concentrates on Greek ideals concerning the treatment of such groups, who often had much in common with many modern forced migrants: they were forced to flee from their homes *en masse*, in order to seek safety from civil or interstate violence. Even within this group there was, however, much diversity. In particular, as will be seen, civil wars or *staseis* tended to lead to the displacement of particular political factions, who could style themselves as political exiles, pursuing a return home at the expense of their domestic rivals (see below, section 3, on Akarnanian exiles at Athens). In the case of interstate war, by contrast, the displaced were often fleeing the destruction or occupation of their whole city (see below, section 4, on displaced Plataeans at Athens or displaced Samians in the wider Greek world). Nonetheless, even if they had been displaced through quite different processes, all displaced groups seeking hospitality and aid posed similar questions for host cities: on what grounds should these obvious outsiders from the citizen-body, arriving in need and distress, be granted aid from civic resources?

2. Refugees and supplication in Aeschylus

Before broadening out to analyse the broader ancient Greek context, and its complex modern legacy, it is worth examining in detail a specific example from Classical Athenian tragic drama. Tragic drama is one of the richest surviving sources of evidence for Athenian civic ideology and collective ethical reflection.¹³ My specific example concerns a tragic play written in the later 460s BC by Aeschylus, the first of the three major Athenian tragic playwrights, which addressed directly the issue of refugee aid. This was Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women*, which drew on the Greek myths about the Danaids, the fifty daughters of Danaus, who fled from Egypt in order to avoid being forced to marry their cousins, the sons of King Aegyptus. Aeschylus, like other Athenian tragedians, wrote plays for performance at public festivals of the Athenian democracy. That deeply political context immediately makes it clear why Athenian drama was so closely linked with civic debates and political ideology.

The Danaus and Danaids of Aeschylus’ play seek the help of Pelasgus, king of Argos, one of the major cities of Greek myth and history. They supplicate Pelasgus: they perform the common Greek ritual called supplication, a formal way of entreating the help of the more powerful or secure.¹⁴ In the play, Danaus reports to his fellow refugees the success of this appeal. Pelasgus has referred their case to the Argives in assembly. The Argives have voted to allow the Danaids to live in their territory, free, protected from seizure, and with *asylia*: ‘inviolability’ or ‘safety’ against physical threats. No one, Argive or foreign, is to be allowed to capture them; any Argive who fails to protect them will lose his civic rights. Importantly,

Danaus gives a hint of Pelasgus' successful argument to the assembly: the Argives should never provoke the anger of the god Zeus, the protector of suppliants.¹⁵

Aeschylus thus represents the Argives treating respect for the god Zeus, in his capacity as protector of suppliants, as a very weighty reason to grant protection to these forced migrants, perhaps even sufficient in itself, irrespective of these migrants' particular credentials. The Argives have accepted what they perceive as Zeus's expectations, which have a humanitarian bent, in the sense outlined above: those with the capacity to help should act unquestioningly on requests for aid by any fellow human beings in serious need of protection from exploitation or persecution.

Aeschylus seems to be portraying here something which has significant similarities with, though it is far from identical to, the modern liberal ideology and practice of asylum.¹⁶ The quasi-democratic state in this play, Argos, grants refuge, with formal legal guarantees, to individuals who approach it with a formal request for protection against persecution by the leaders of their home community. In doing so, the state recognises universal duties towards any fellow humans in need of protection, enforced by Zeus. These duties are 'universal' with respect to their potential beneficiaries: the particular origins and character of the suppliants are irrelevant; all humans have an equal claim to this kind of compassionate aid when in severe need. These duties are also 'universal' in their binding force: any individual or group is obliged to observe them, since no-one can escape Zeus' authority. Not to observe them would be to cast oneself out from civilised society, and from Zeus' good-will. The language of 'asylum', *asylia*, even features in the ancient Greek context, as in the modern. The relationship between the hosts and the refugees might appear paternalistic, but it is at least regulated through formal legal provisions and a strict religious code.

There are, of course, significant differences between Aeschylus' picture, paralleled in some other Athenian tragic drama,¹⁷ and contemporary, post-1945 liberal ideology and law concerning asylum. The democratic voting on asylum in Aeschylus' play is alien to modern liberal approaches, which treat asylum as a universal legal principle, not something open to democratic deliberation. Nonetheless, Aeschylus' Argives do not deliberate and vote as if engaged in a routine Greek political debate. Rather, they vote to recognise and uphold a universal principle, even though it is one which has religious rather than legal grounding; to make any other decision would be to break a major taboo.¹⁸ Like those responsible in modern states for scrutinising asylum-seekers' claims, they simply judge whether the particular suppliants in the particular case before them are covered by the universal requirement. In any case, as discussed in section 4 below, it is doubtful whether many such votes on asylum took place in historical reality, rather than in myth and theatre, where they serve special dramatic and ideological functions.

Another important contrast is that modern liberal practice and ideology concerning asylum are not themselves straightforwardly unconditional,¹⁹ like Aeschylus' Argives' approach. The specific focus of the most widespread form of modern liberal asylum law is aid to those who suffer persecution on the grounds of certain protected characteristics (race, caste, nationality, religion, political options or participation in a social group). This approach, which has roots in Cold War rivalries, has been criticised for making eligibility for asylum too narrow and conditional, but also praised as a sensible way of preserving a distinct type of concern and protection for victims of persecution, exiled from membership of their political communities.²⁰ Nonetheless, modern liberal law and ideals are unconditional in ways relevant to the comparison with the tragic play: relevant modern legal standards do guarantee

unconditional asylum for all who can demonstrate that they have suffered persecution on relevant grounds, regardless of the specific content of their relevant religious or political opinions and social relationships.

This point can be well expressed in terms of the modern distinction between ‘impartial’ and ‘partial’ approaches to refugee questions. As Gibney puts it, modern liberal arguments for aid to refugees tend to emphasise ‘impartiality’: a liberal democratic state has a duty to give equal, impartial consideration to the needs of all humans, or all who reach its territory, regardless of their particular origins, status, identity, beliefs, or view of the good life and good society. Such arguments from ‘impartiality’ are directed against defenders of ‘partiality’, who argue that states should concentrate on the needs of their own citizens, and the promotion of the state’s own distinctive culture.²¹

A further complication in the comparison between the Aeschylean approach and modern liberal asylum is that impartiality does not coincide precisely with humanity or humanitarianism. Nonetheless, an important driver of the modern liberal ideal of impartiality towards refugees is the aspiration to give sophisticated legal and normative form to ideals of equal compassionate concern for the needs of all human beings. This humanitarian impulse finds expression, not only in liberal ideals of asylum, but also in liberal arguments for broader types of aid, including ‘subsidiary’ and ‘humanitarian’ protection, for a wider range of refugees, including those displaced for other reasons than persecution, especially war. These broader types of aid have achieved new levels of prominence since the end of the Cold War.²²

In the light of these considerations, there is an important shared element of impartiality and humanitarianism which binds together the ethical approach to asylum of ideal modern liberals and Aeschylus’ Argives. Nevertheless, this particular case-study is not a reliable guide to the wider ancient Greek picture. Even if important aspects of the modern liberal practice and ideology of asylum were prefigured in the Athenian theatre, other ancient Greek evidence tends to point in other directions. Aeschylus himself, and his Athenian audience, may themselves have been quite sceptical about the Argives’ decision to grant unconditional asylum to the Danaids: the subsequent two plays of Aeschylus’ trilogy about the Danaids are very likely to have portrayed their presence in Argos as highly disruptive.²³ In any case, other Classical Greeks who addressed the issue of refuge tended to favour ideals much further removed from modern liberal ones, for interesting reasons which I explore in the following sections.

3. Practical differences affecting ancient Greek and modern liberal approaches to refugees

Some of the reasons why many ancient Greek practices and ideologies were distant from modern liberal ones were pragmatic. In mythical contexts such as that of the Danaids, it was easy to imagine an all-powerful persecutor, such as King Aegyptus, whose power stretched far beyond his own territorial borders. In reality, however, the world of the ancient Greek city-states was very different. Famous cities like Athens, Sparta and Argos represent only a handful of the total number of city-states. In the Classical period (c. 480–323 BC), there were at any one time around 1000 city-states around the Aegean and the wider Mediterranean.²⁴ In the following centuries, after the conquests of Alexander the Great, even more city-states were founded and flourished, in the Near and Middle East as well as the older Greek World. Occasionally one state became overwhelmingly dominant, like Sparta after its victory in the famous fifth-century Peloponnesian War. In such a context it became worthy of note that other cities gave safe residence to opponents of the dominant power.²⁵ In general, however,

power was so fragmented and widely distributed, with many different city-states in competition, that it was relatively straightforward for refugees to find a new place of residence, away from their persecutors.

Another practical reason why the mere granting of *residence* rights was not usually something to boast about in ancient Greece was the nature of Greek cities' approaches to foreign residents more generally. In most city-states, there was a special category of resident foreigners who had moved into the city from elsewhere, often called metics, as at Athens; this status category often coexisted with a range of other status categories for residents who were free, rather than slaves, but not full citizens.²⁶ Metics were long-term foreign residents, often voluntary rather than forced migrants from another city or region, who had formally registered as residents of their new city. This status carried very substantial financial and military burdens, with relatively few corresponding privileges.²⁷ As a result, the presence of foreign residents was usually much less of a controversial issue than in modern liberal democracies: in the absence of any strong ethical or political pressure to integrate resident foreigners within the exclusive, privileged group of citizens, cities did not need to worry about profiting to the full from foreign residents' labour and contributions to civic life. This arrangement meant that it was usually not the grant of mere residence rights to refugees, but more substantial grants of aid and privileges, which ancient Greek cities considered it worth advertising as a special service.²⁸

This tendency is evident from one of the most revealing surviving sources of evidence for ancient Greek cities' approaches to forced migrants: documents recording and publicising the grant of aid and privileges to them, usually awarded to groups.²⁹ Such documents are preserved because Greek cities inscribed them durably on stone for public consumption, in keeping with their more general practice of inscribing on stone important civic laws and decisions. Several such inscriptions are preserved from the Classical Athenian democracy.³⁰ One records aid granted to some exiles from the region of Akarnania in the western part of the central Greek mainland (dating to 338/7 BC).³¹ This inscribed decree first confirms the hereditary honorific Athenian citizenship of the Akarnanian exiles' leaders, Phormio and Karphinas, and then grants extensive specific privileges to the other displaced Akarnanians. According to the text which scholars have reconstructed, these other privileges were granted as follows:

Praise also the other Akarnanians who have come to help with Phormio and Karphinas, and let them have, until they return home from exile, the legal entitlement to own whatever houses they wish, provided that they are living at Athens, exempt from the tax on resident foreigners (the *metoikion*); and let them bring and incur legal suits like Athenians, and pay special one-off taxes (*eisphorai*), if any arise, together with the Athenians. And the council, which is always deliberating, and the *strategoí* [leading military officials of the Athenian state], who are always in office, should take care of them, so that they do not suffer any injustice.

These Akarnanian beneficiaries were allies of the Athenians, who had been fighting on the Athenians' side in the wars of the mid-fourth-century, but now found themselves expelled from their home cities in Akarnania as a result of changes of regime. The privileges they gained included some which were usually limited to citizens: the unrestricted right to buy houses at Athens and participate fully in the Athenian courts, as well as the full support of Athenian officials. Significantly, their privileges probably also included, if the reconstruction is correct, exemption from the *metoikion*, the standard tax on resident foreigners. This

confirms that this grant was intended precisely to raise the status of these refugee friends of Athens above that of run-of-the-mill metics, by granting them something much greater than mere safe residence.³²

4. The Classical Athenian ‘city of refuge’: patriotism, reciprocity, justice and freedom

In addition to these practical considerations, there were also ideological reasons why humanitarian, unconditional approaches to refuge were not standard in Classical Athens. In ancient Greece, as in modern Greece, ideals of open, unconditional hospitality to strangers, and humanity towards the weak and vulnerable, were pervasive. Hospitality and guest-friendship are already very important in the Homeric poems. Also prominent there is the practice of supplication, already encountered above in the Aeschylus passage, which was certainly not restricted to forced migrants. Moreover, asylum in the technical Greek sense, also encountered above in the Aeschylus’ passage, was taken very seriously: certain religious sites, especially temples and their altars, were inviolable.³³ Those who took refuge in such places were protected from seizure by their enemies or by civic authorities: their fate, and possible punishment, was now a matter for the gods, beyond the scope of politics and law.³⁴ Seeking asylum at an altar or temple was equally as possible within one’s one state as beyond it: in civil wars, for example, an individual or faction could seek refuge at an altar in an attempt to avoid suffering violence.³⁵

Nevertheless, although these ethical and religious ideals were pervasive in Greek culture, a strong case can be made that the Greek city-states found it quite difficult to integrate them into their *political* ideologies and institutions, including those concerned with refuge. As Price has argued on quite different grounds, the ancient Greeks tended to treat decisions about refuge as governed by distinctive political norms and logic.³⁶ The nature of ancient Greek politics is obviously a very complex and debated issue,³⁷ but a few broad generalisations can be made, which will gradually be justified better in the course of this paper. In ancient Greece, strict politics and political deliberation were usually the province of hard-headed calculation of interests, including (or especially) collective civic interests.³⁸ There were significant interstate institutions, regulations and norms, which governed both diplomacy and warfare, but even those gave considerable weight and scope to the interests of individual city-states.³⁹ To add another similarly broad generalisation, ancient Greek political life was also often a sphere dominated by particular relationships and attachments, including relations of patriotism and honour.⁴⁰ Furthermore, it was also normally a domain strongly shaped by ideals of strict justice and demanding civic virtue.⁴¹

These varied political considerations were often difficult to square with ethical and religious requirements of humane concern for all fellow humans.⁴² We can even see the Athenian theatre, where Athenian tragic plays were performed, as an unusual place of collective questioning and reflection. In the theatre, exceptionally, conflicts between politics and ethics, or between justice and humanity, could be explored, and aspirations for a more humane politics expressed. Modern thinkers have often seen Sophocles’ *Antigone*, for example, as an exploration of the conflict between religious and ethical norms of human and humane sympathy and the harsher demands of political and legal justice.⁴³

Tendencies towards universalism and humanitarianism clashed, on the one hand, with the inequalities and self-interest of Greek cities. The Greek city-states relied on quite rigid and complex status distinctions: distinctions between slaves and free; and between citizens and free non-citizens, such as metics.⁴⁴ Moreover, membership of most status categories was deeply conditional: an individual could lose citizen status, and sometimes even free status, if

he or she transgressed against certain civic laws and norms.⁴⁵ Conditionality could also be positive: certain citizens and foreigners received particular honour and privileges, in recognition of outstanding civic virtue and contributions. For example, in their decree for the Akarnanian exiles (quoted above), the Athenians advertised their special aid to particular exiles who had ended up in exile partly as a result of their loyalty to Athens. In a separate case, the fourth-century orator Demosthenes, in a speech advising the Athenians not to alter the privileges of benefactors of the city, explicitly exhorted the Athenians not to forget their reciprocal obligations to aid those who had been forced into exile through their loyalty to Athens.⁴⁶ As Demosthenes recognised,⁴⁷ the aim of such aid to loyal exiles was partly to provide an incentive to other Athenian allies, or potential allies, to exert themselves on Athens' behalf. Similarly, aid to certain exiles could serve a polis' self-interest by raising the prospect of good treatment in return, perhaps in the event that the hosts should find themselves exiled in future.⁴⁸ Aid which was presented as unconditional and humanitarian could not have had the same incentivising effects; it might even undermine the whole system of differentiated, conditional status.

On the other hand, universalism and humanitarianism were also quite hard to reconcile with other aspects of Greek city-states' culture which were themselves clearly ethical, especially many Greek cities' strong concern with substantial standards of justice, equality, virtue and freedom. Stress on unconditional, humane benevolence to refugees would not have obviously advanced those ideals. It might even have curtailed them, by appearing to devalue the ideal of special commitment to one's own particular community, and to downgrade the particular, intense types of egalitarian solidarity which become possible within a close-knit polis. By contrast, linking aid to refugees to the defence and promotion of certain values enabled the Athenians to use the practices and rhetoric of a city of refuge to advance their specific, demanding political and cultural ideals.⁴⁹

This can be illustrated through speeches by two of the major orators of the fourth-century Athenian democracy, Lysias and Isocrates. Both of these orators celebrate Athens' aid to refugees in an idealistic spirit, in speeches which extol Athens' virtues as a political and ethical model.⁵⁰ Needless to say, these orators gave a distinctly one-sided picture of Athens' role and motivations. In practice, the Athenians were sometimes motivated to aid refugees, or to refuse aid, as a result of calculations of immediate self-interest, rather than any considerations of ethics or reciprocity. Christ, for example, sees a strong opportunistic dimension in the Athenians' decision in the early 340s BC to send aid to the city of Olynthos in northern Greece, under pressure from Philip II of Macedon, despite the mixed history of Athenian-Olynthian relations. One consequence of this convenient co-operation was that the Athenians subsequently gave aid to some of the refugees from Olynthos displaced when Philip II succeeded in destroying the city. They did so surely partly in order to encourage other cities – including those not already close friends with Athens – to continue to resist Philip.⁵¹ Moreover, the Athenians had done much to create, as well as to help, refugees while running their fifth-century BC empire.⁵² Even in the fourth century BC itself, the Athenians notoriously expelled the whole citizen population of the island polis of Samos, in order to establish an Athenian settlement there. On their return after their long collective displacement (365–322 BC), the Samians passed decrees in praise of a wide range of individuals and cities around the Aegean and wider Mediterranean who had chosen, surely in a partly anti-Athenian spirit, to aid them during their exile.⁵³ This confirms that many other cities than Athens engaged in the Classical period in giving hospitality and aid to the displaced, establishing or reinforcing particular, partial relationships with them, based on mutual recognition of shared interests and values.

Despite their distortions of a complex reality, the speeches of Lysias and Isocrates give some of the best insights into the more idealistic features of Classical Athenian ideology concerning refugee aid. The key point for the argument here is that, when these two orators present Athens as a city of refuge, their emphasis falls squarely on justice: even in these most idealistic expressions of Athenian hospitality, the ideal of unconditional, humane aid to suppliants is absent or muted. The comparison between the ideology of these speeches and modern liberal approaches to refugees is, nonetheless, a complex one. Indeed, the rhetoric of Lysias and Isocrates hovers in interesting ways between the ideals captured by the modern terms ‘impartiality’ and ‘partiality’, discussed in section 2 above.⁵⁴

The two orators strike a clear note of eagerness to enforce standards of justice which are universal, and certainly transcend Athenian society and its borders. In his early fourth-century *Funeral Speech*, Lysias praises the mythical ancient Athenians’ aid to the children of Heracles when they came to Athens as suppliants fleeing their pursuer, King Eurystheus, who subsequently sought their extradition. Lysias presents this as an example of the Athenians’ desire to fight for the weaker ‘with justice’, rather than to hand over the victims of injustice (the *adikoumenoi*) to their powerful oppressors.⁵⁵ This language is picked up by Isocrates, who praises Athens, in his *Panegyricus* of c. 380 BC, as a ‘common city’ for all, which stands up for those who have suffered injustice,⁵⁶ almost certainly including refugees.⁵⁷ Isocrates also applied this trope in a more specific context in his *Plataicus*, a later speech written ostensibly for delivery by some Plataean refugees of the 370s BC. These were descendants of more famous fifth-century Plataean refugees (see below, this section), who were again pleading for Athenian aid. Isocrates’ Plataeans there open by appealing to the Athenians’ history of helping victims of injustice, and later present themselves as suppliants, with faith in Athens’ long tradition of aid to suppliants.⁵⁸

These notes in the orators’ rhetoric sound quite close to liberal impartiality; but other aspects of their speeches show that they certainly did not aspire to be neutral between views of the good life and the good society, or impartial in their treatments of the advocates of those different values. Isocrates makes clear in the *Panegyricus* passage that Athenian aid to the victims of injustice is not truly universal: the Athenians support *Greeks* who suffer injustice.⁵⁹

Moreover, the Athenian ideal of aid to refugee victims of injustice was usually also restrictive and partial even when it came to Greeks. This is clearest in Isocrates’ late work, the *Panathenaicus* (340s BC). In that work, Isocrates contrasts Athens and Sparta. Whereas the Spartans drove out from their homes the people of the cities of Messene and Plataea, Athens provided these victims of injustice with refuge: they settled the Messenians in the city of Naupaktos; and they gave the famous fifth-century Plataean refugees refuge, and citizenship, in Athens itself.⁶⁰ Isocrates makes quite clear in this discussion that he is working with a distinctly partial, and very substantial and rich, vision of Greek history, politics and culture, as a basis for his conception of justice and benevolence. He celebrates the Plataeans, for example, as indispensable contributors to the Greek war effort against the Persians in the fifth-century Persian Wars, which Isocrates presents as a successful struggle for Greek freedom.

For Isocrates, therefore, the value of the Athenians’ integration of the expelled Plataeans as their own fellow citizens did not lie principally in its impartial justice, but rather in its recognition, promotion and assimilation of the particular virtues and contributions of a specific community, the Plataeans, who were both close friends and kin of the Athenians and

broadly 'benefactors of Greece'. Conversely, the Spartans' conduct was particularly reprehensible because they mistreated those to whom they were bound by specific relations of kinship.⁶¹ Isocrates had also laid stress on the Plataeans' special virtues and kinship and loyalty with Athens, as grounds for reciprocal Athenian aid, in his *Plataicus*:⁶² the appeals there to Athenian generosity to victims of injustice and to suppliants are quickly followed by reminders of the Plataeans' particular concrete services to Athens, which deserve an appropriate, just return.⁶³

In general, the Classical Athenians tended especially to favour refugees and exiles who were transparent partisans of the Athenian democracy, like the Akarnanians or Plataeans, and had been displaced as a result.⁶⁴ Indeed, the Athenians were particularly well-disposed, in a clearly 'partial', conditional way, to those exiles who, like the Akarnanians and Plataeans, had a longstanding record of loyalty to Athens, often already institutionalised through formal diplomatic links and grants of special status. The Akarnanians' leaders, for example, were already honorary citizens of Athens (compare above). Other exiles might benefit from pre-existing grants of proxeny (a grant of the formal status of diplomatic representative of the granting city in one's home city).⁶⁵

As a result of the 'partial' dimension of the Athenians' approach, there was no question of Athenian aid to the victims of injustice extending to Spartans, or to other anti-democrats, who might have suffered unjust treatment. The Athenian city of refuge was not seeking to be an impartial melting-pot: as the evidence of inscriptions and speeches shows, the Classical Athenians approached and represented their granting of aid to particular refugees as a way of maintaining particular useful, reciprocal diplomatic relationships, but also as part of a radical project to change the world, in an egalitarian and democratic direction, in furtherance of specific historical struggles for freedom and equality. This is true even though, in practice, that project was closely bound up with Athenian interests, and even Athenian imperialism, in ways which continue to be debated vigorously.⁶⁶

5. Gender, citizenship and autonomy in Athenian debates about refuge

There is another ideological dimension to the question of why the quite humanitarian approach of Aeschylus' Argives, considered in section 2, is not characteristic of mainstream Classical Greek political rhetoric about refugee aid, even its more idealistic forms. This dimension concerns questions of gender and age, patronage and independence. It is worth noting that Aeschylus' play concerns suppliant *women*. Similarly, it is not coincidental that one of the other main Greek myths about aid to refugees concerns the *children* of Heracles, quite young in age, often represented as accompanied by an *elderly* escort, Iolaos.⁶⁷ It was precisely those who were not adult male citizens who could be straightforwardly presented as deserving of humane compassion and support.⁶⁸ In Classical Athenian ideology, adult males were, by contrast, expected to be capable of much greater independence and self-defence.⁶⁹ It would have been demeaning, or feminising, for adult males to accept any form of charity, or any other relationship which placed them in a position of clear dependence on hosts.

Instead of posing as humane champions of helpless refugees, the Athenians strove to equip adult male refugees with the means to continue to act, even in exile, as self-sufficient, autonomous political agents. For example, in their grant of privileges to the Akarnanians (quoted above), the Athenians explicitly granted privileges to the Akarnanians only 'until they return home'. The Athenians thus presupposed that the Akarnanians would be sufficiently organised and courageous to achieve a successful return, defeating their opponents at home. The Athenians also often collaborated with displaced groups in enabling

them to create at least an appearance of autonomy as ‘cities-in-exile’ or ‘citizens-in-exile’, with their own improvised institutions, diplomatic links and collective activities.⁷⁰

While these Athenian-supported ‘cities-in-exile’ (or ‘quasi-cities-in-exile’) were often based in Athens, they could also coalesce elsewhere, in contexts which would have made it easier for their members to claim relative independence and self-sufficiency. For example, the exiles from Messenia settled in the city of Naupaktos by the Athenians, mentioned by Isocrates (see previous section), organised themselves, and acted, as a ‘city-in-exile’. Indeed, they probably did much, alongside their fellow exiles from the region, to develop and sharpen a Messenian political identity, including its foundational idea that the Messenians were a coherent, traditional ethnic group dedicated to liberation from Spartan oppression, to be achieved through the foundation of a free Messenian polis in the Peloponnese.⁷¹ The power relations in play between Athens and different exile groups were, in reality, complex: as noted above, aid to favourable refugees was itself an arm of Athenian imperialism. Nonetheless, it is significant that both the Athenians and the beneficiaries themselves tried to conceal, or even palliate, that inequality.

Temporary, improvised ‘cities-in-exile’ were created, in Athens and elsewhere,⁷² not only by exiled political factions, but also by those who were unquestionably refugees: for example, the Plataean refugee community in Athens held a monthly meeting in the Athenian cheese-market,⁷³ partly comparable to the monthly principal assembly of a settled polis. Indeed, ancient Greece was rich in self-confident, resilient and politicised refugees, of the type whose importance in world history Gatrell has recently emphasised.⁷⁴ Indeed, exile and refugee communities, with their own institutions and agency, interacted dynamically with a much broader range of migrant communities in Greek cities: recent studies have brought into increasing focus the complexity and vitality of Greek cities’ voluntary social, economic and religious associations, which often cut across the citizen-foreigner boundary to include foreign residents, whether they were forced or voluntary migrants.⁷⁵ There was thus rich social and collective life in Greek cities beyond interactions within the main citizen-body; but that broader social life was itself strongly shaped by the structures and ideals of citizenship and civic participation, ripe for improvised co-optation and adaptation.⁷⁶

6. Cosmopolitanism in Classical Athenian exile politics

To summarise my argument so far, Classical Greek, or Classical Athenian, discourse about refugee aid was marked by unequal competition between a secondary ideal of humanitarianism, underpinned by religious standards, and the more prominent ideal of the just city of refuge, which predominated in practical political rhetoric. These two ideals were also in tension with a third ideal: cosmopolitanism. This was a more marginal and disruptive ideal. Indeed, the original advocates of a cosmopolitan approach to all refugees which was highly inclusive and universalist, but still resolutely political or civic, were precisely those exiles and refugees in Athens who fell through the cracks of official Athenian aid.⁷⁷ These early cosmopolitan exiles were members of the Cynic and Stoic philosophical schools in Athens, especially the Cynic exiles Diogenes of Sinope and Crates of Thebes. Diogenes was unlike most of the displaced Greeks considered here, because he had not been forced into exile as part of a large group: according to the richly symbolic story of social subversion which was later used to explain his exile, he had been driven into exile from Sinope on the Black Sea, together with his father, because either he or his father had tampered with his home city’s coinage, for which they were responsible.⁷⁸ Crates did, however, have much in common with refugees discussed so far: his home city of Thebes was destroyed by Alexander the Great in 335 BC.⁷⁹

These Cynic philosophers took aim squarely at the prevailing particularism of the Greek civic world. The Cynics argued that they were themselves exiles only by convention. In fact, they could never be exiled from their true ‘city’, the natural cosmopolis of all virtuous men who ‘live according to nature’.⁸⁰ This stance gave rise to a wide range of ethical anecdotes about the early Cynics and their approach to exile, which were recorded by later writers. Crates, for example, was later said to have rejected Alexander the Great’s suggestion that Thebes could be rebuilt: that would only lay it open to attack by another Alexander. Crates reputedly preferred to treat poverty and lack of fame as his ‘country’, as a ‘fellow citizen’ of Diogenes.⁸¹

Cosmopolitanism thus originated as a very radical attack on the very notion of particular states and borders, in favour of the ideal of an all-encompassing world polis. In rejecting particular civic affiliations, the early Cynic philosophers were implicitly rejecting the tendency of their hosts, the Athenians, to create and support separate expatriate groups, each devoted to retaining strong links with their home polis. They were, however, also going further: implicit in their arguments was a rejection of the very notion that there ever truly is a relationship between a refugee and a host, rather than between two ‘citizens of the world’. Although Greek cosmopolitanism started off as a mainly negative philosophy, it was also given more constructive form in subsequent centuries; this is the concern of the next section.

7. Hellenistic developments

The three approaches to refugee aid converged in interesting ways in the Hellenistic period (c. 323–31 BC). That is the age, after the reign of Alexander the Great, of the great kingdoms of the Ptolemies, the Seleucids, and others. Greek cities continued to exist and prosper within these kingdoms, and in the gaps between them. The character of these cities, and their political ideologies, is a prominent, much debated issue in contemporary ancient history.⁸² This section examines the interaction of different civic ideals, new and old, in approaches to displaced people in Hellenistic cities.

Alexander’s wide-ranging conquests, throughout the Near and Middle East, vastly increased the extent and variety of the Greek world, as well as making its overarching political structures more hierarchical. This created a social and political environment propitious for an increase in interest in mankind as an ethical community which cut across boundaries of status and citizenship. Although it quickly became prominent in Hellenistic philosophy,⁸³ this more universalistic approach did not immediately percolate into the civic discourse of the Greek cities: Greek civic institutions and discourse of the third century BC were often remarkably consistent with those of the fourth century.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, more universalistic approaches did gain greater prominence in civic discourse in the second and first centuries BC, although traditional particularist ideals remained strong at the same time.

This development was most vividly reflected in the increasing attention given in the official rhetoric of Greek cities in the second and first centuries BC to the virtue of *philanthropia*, literally ‘love of humanity’, first mentioned in the introduction to this paper. *Philanthropia* even came often to be expected of good citizens, as a key part of their civic virtue and lifestyle, including their interactions with fellow citizens. That development was certainly due to a range of factors, including specific social and political changes of the mid- and later Hellenistic world: for example, Roman intervention and the consolidation of inequalities within poleis, which increased the need for paternalistic charity. Nonetheless, the influence of more universalistic ethics must have been an important part of the process, alongside other

causes.⁸⁵ As noted in the introduction to this paper, *philanthropia* was not straightforwardly a humanitarian virtue as well as a humane one: it did not automatically demand impartial compassion towards all humans equally. Nonetheless, through its etymology and its usage, explored further below, the word did point in that direction: if one is a ‘lover of humanity’, then one should appreciate human characteristics and needs, wherever they happen to be found, without discrimination.⁸⁶

These developments had repercussions for the Hellenistic cities’ approaches to the question of refugee aid, especially from the second century BC onwards. Indeed, from that point, humanitarian considerations came to play a prominent role even in some official civic rhetoric, avowedly political in nature. That is to say, the kinds of official civic document and practical political rhetoric studied in earlier sections of this paper began to take on new features: while their Classical Athenian versions had concentrated on clearly political and particularist grounds for aid to the displaced, mid- and later Hellenistic documents and speeches gave a new prominence to more humanitarian considerations, of kinds which had earlier been advocated more by playwrights and other intellectuals.

Hellenistic references to refugee aid are found in inscribed ‘honorary decrees’ of Greek cities: formal decrees which cities passed in their assemblies, in order to honour benefactors and show gratitude. One such decree, dating to the early second century BC, records the honours passed by the city of Elateia in central Greece in honour of the citizens of Stymphalos in the Peloponnese, who had helped them when they were driven out of their own city by war:⁸⁷

... [showing] assiduousness in humane behaviour, appropriate to our kinship (?) (ἐκτενεῖ[αν φιλα]νθρωπίας τᾷ σ[υγγενεῖαι καθ]ακοῦσαν) ... they welcomed us, each of them into his own home, with all humanity (?), and from public funds they provided all of us with bread rations for a substantial period of time and provided everything which was necessary. And they shared with us their sacred activities and sacrifices, considering us their own fellow citizens. And they divided up some of their own territory and distributed it to us Elateians, and gave general immunity from taxation for a period of ten years....

The Stymphalians had thus ensured the Elateians’ welfare by giving them access to food, land and religious life. In an interesting sign of the transition to a new approach in official political rhetoric about refugees, the Elateians praised the Stymphalians at the start, if the text has been reconstructed correctly, for ‘assiduousness in humane behaviour, appropriate to our kinship’: they cited both universal humanity and particular relations of kinship, based on the cities’ shared mythical history; new and old political ideals sat side-by-side. Interestingly, the decree emphasised the collective grant of charitable help, not only to women and children, but also to adult male citizens, who gratefully accepted the aid. Despite the presence of these male Elateians, the Stymphalians did not help the Elateians to continue to behave like an autonomous political group, in a further contrast with the Classical Athenian model: as the inscription goes on to record, the Stymphalians performed embassies on the Elateian refugees’ behalf. As a result, there comes into view in this text something with particularly strong affinities with the modern status of refugee: a dependent political status open to all, including adult males displaced from their normal settled citizenship.⁸⁸

Similar rhetoric features in another honorary decree passed by a Greek city, much later in the second century BC, this time for an individual. This is an honorary decree passed by the city of Colophon in western Asia Minor for a particularly wealthy and prominent citizen,

Polemaios. Dating to around the 120s BC, when the Roman conquest of the Greek world was well advanced, it praised Polemaios as follows:⁸⁹

He has also treated in a civic and humane way many of those who have taken refuge with the people, as a result of chance difficulties, and sought help. He has enthusiastically made financial contributions and joined in taking in the refugees, both on his own account and in response to the appeals for help made by the people.... He has also made friendly loans to not few of the foreigners in need who took refuge with the people, not overlooking anyone who has been struck down by a crisis, but ensuring that he is equal towards all and through everything always acts as a benefactor, not only in public towards those inhabiting the city, but also in private....

Polemaios was thus praised for having given financial aid, both donations and loans, to refugees who fled to his home city, presumably fleeing war and unrest. This is perhaps the point in the Greek sources at which displaced people are conceptualised and represented in a way most in keeping with a prominent modern stereotype of refugees: refugees as a heterogeneous, dependent, even helpless group, in need of both protection and positive aid. Polemaios' aid to these people was very forcefully presented, in this formal political document, as evidence of his *philanthropia*.

It was not only refugees from war who were deemed worthy of humane, charitable treatment in some post-Classical Greek cities: even political exiles could be treated in this way. In an honorary inscription from the first century AD, the community of the Lycians, an ethnic group based in southern Asia Minor, praised a wealthy female benefactor, Junia Theodora, living in Corinth in the Peloponnese, for her generosity towards members of an exiled Lycian political faction. This was presented as a particular reflection of her tendency towards general sympathy and benevolence towards all.⁹⁰ Issues of gender are again relevant: gentle, humane virtues, newly respected as political virtues, could be comfortably attributed to women benefactors, as well as men. The connection with first-century AD Corinth is also interesting for discerning broader trends: this was the Corinth of Paul and his letters. This is symbolic of the way in which language of humane philanthropy in the Hellenistic Greek cities fed directly, alongside other sources, into early Christianity, and its universalistic ethics of charity.⁹¹

This might well appear a very traditional picture of the development of Hellenistic Greek ethics and politics towards the ethical approaches of the Roman Empire⁹² and early Christianity, which was already a cliché in the writings of Hegel and Nietzsche. According to this picture, Classical Greek concern with the small-scale city, and with strict justice, equality and democracy, gave way to a Hellenistic focus on the whole world community of Greeks or humans, and duties of charitable benevolence binding them together. According to a common version of this view, the new emphasis on humane concern, including humane concern for exiles and refugees, is a sign of depoliticisation, which robbed the weak, including refugees, of political agency. Indeed, the argument continues, this new emphasis is a sign of the triumph of a Greek elite which could increasingly dispense with democratic scrutiny or considerations of justice and equality, and instead make paternalistic use of the language and gestures of philanthropy to pre-empt dissent and reinforce the status quo.⁹³

It is true that I am partly subscribing to this view, but the situation was more complex. As noted above, more traditional civic ideals remained vibrant alongside newer universalistic ones, and sometimes the two were combined. For example, in the relevant section of the honorary decree of Colophon for Polemaios, quoted above, humanitarian ethics did not drive

out questions of citizenship, justice and equality. On the contrary, the citizens of Colophon there attempted to reconcile within a single ideology politics and ethics, justice and humanitarianism. Polemaios' behaviour towards refugees was explicitly said to be both humane and civic. Moreover, it was claimed that his humanity was consistent with the whole ethos of his polis.⁹⁴ Paradoxically, according to this decree, it is only within a specific polis that an individual can learn to be truly humane or humanitarian, and act accordingly.

It was also explicitly claimed that Polemaios' behaviour promoted a universal type of equality. He wished to behave in a way 'equal towards all', or at least towards all residents of his city, whether they were citizens or not: true civic concern extends in a cosmopolitan direction.⁹⁵ Moreover, the generosity to the refugees was not solely a result of Polemaios' arbitrary charity: he responded to a formal public appeal by the city for donations to help the refugees. This resembles the way in which the Stymphalians' humane concern (see above) was put into practice through formal civic decisions and embassies. Moreover, both Polemaios' and the Stymphalians' generosity was also subject to public scrutiny through the honouring process itself, leading to the decrees quoted here, through which civic assemblies scrutinised their behaviour. Robust civic institutions, including some with redistributive functions, could thus be reconciled with an emphasis on humane concern for the weak.

This type of ideological reconciliation was not universally popular in the Hellenistic cities, but it did have wider resonance. It was sometimes applied in official documents to the issue of outsiders more generally. In an honorary decree of the city of Priene in western Asia Minor, also dating to the late Hellenistic period (first century BC), Aulus Aurelius Zosimos, himself a foreigner who had been naturalised as a citizen, was praised for providing the humane benefaction (*philanthropia*) of a special breakfast 'to all on equal terms' on his first day in office. He included even slaves and foreigners, disregarding their inferior legal status. Indeed, Zosimos was explicitly praised for recognising, if only for one day, that the inferior status of slaves and foreigners is only a social construct, which conceals a deeper human equality.⁹⁶

In sum, there are select traces in Hellenistic civic rhetoric of phenomena partly familiar from modern, post-1945 liberal approaches to refugee aid, though obviously also still very different from them. The main point of contact is that these Hellenistic inscriptions attest an attempt to reconcile the conflicting triad of Classical Greek approaches to refugee aid, by fusing humanitarianism and cosmopolitanism with the language and institutions of political justice and law, still centred on the individual state. This attempt at synthesis can be reasonably compared with many modern liberals' attempts, through the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees, and subsequent applications and justifications of them, to synthesise those different values into unified new ideals of human equality, human rights and cosmopolitan universalism, also still enforced by individual states.⁹⁷

That overlap between Hellenistic and modern approaches raises complex ethical and political issues. Is it a coincidence, or is it troubling, that this kind of attempted synthesis first emerged in ancient Greece in the highly unequal, hierarchical world of the Hellenistic poleis, coming under the domination of Rome? It might be argued that this kind of ideology emerges only when elites are sufficiently entrenched not to fear erosion of their property or privileges – which makes it safe to start talking about universal equality, and to politicise humanitarianism. Alternatively, however, it could be argued that this was, in fact, a Hellenistic moral development which modern liberal internationalists can admire, as a highly attractive step forward from the small-city exclusivity of the earlier Greek world.

Even if we do opt to see this Hellenistic trend as an attractive development, we still have to weigh what was lost by opting for political or civic humanitarianism. To what extent did the new Hellenistic discourse of civic humanitarianism deprive the displaced, and other marginal groups, of agency and autonomy? To what extent did it make necessary, or reflect, the abandonment of grand projects of social, political and cultural transformation, of the kind associated with Classical Athens, in favour of a blander universalism, a type of egalitarianism more extensive in scope but diluted in content? As noted above, that apparently bland and benevolent universalist egalitarianism may well have helped to conceal, or palliate, new forms of domination of the weaker by the stronger.⁹⁸ Modern critics of the liberal ideology of human rights, and associated practices,⁹⁹ would no doubt find cautionary precedents in the Hellenistic shifts discussed in this section. The moral question remains whether the losses are offset by the value of the Hellenistic cities' resilient efforts to adapt traditional Greek republicanism, solidarity and participatory politics to suit a new, expanded and more mixed world.

8. Conclusion: broad ancient Greek trends and their modern influence

Ancient Greek ideologies concerning asylum and refuge were marked by complexity, tension and disagreement. The ideological triad of humanitarianism, the city of refuge and cosmopolitanism were in tension in political debates of the Classical period. Some Hellenistic Greeks then fused together contrasting Classical ideals into a complex new ideological synthesis in their political arguments. That Hellenistic synthesis partly prefigures contemporary liberal approaches. According to this picture, the earlier, Classical Greek cities certainly knew of ideas of humanitarianism and universalism, but tended actively to reject or marginalise them in their official, political rhetoric, in favour of more particularist ideals. The story is, therefore, one of rival, conscious moral and political choices, rather than a crudely developmental story of an expanding Greek moral consciousness.

This picture is relevant to modern refugee studies for many reasons. In addition to the comparative angle, already discussed, there is also the issue of the indirect and direct influence of Greek ethics and politics on modern thinking about refuge. The indirect influence comes through Christianity and through the varied European Classical tradition, which have strongly shaped modern democratic and republican political thought and language. One consequence is that modern liberalism, and even modern liberal internationalism, carry not far beneath their universalist surface some of the marks of quite different approaches intrinsic to Classical republican political thought: for example, traces of exclusive, conditional citizenship ideals, and exclusive, conditional approaches to refugees' needs, both underpinned by very robust notions of particularist, patriotic civic virtue.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the way that modern liberal societies continue to give much greater attention and status to political refugees, rather than economic migrants and refugees, must partly reflect the enduring power of the Classical civic and republican tradition, with its stress on the particular value of equal, free political participation. That tradition gave conceptual, linguistic and cultural resources, whether they were conscious of the debt or not, to Cold-War liberals who sought to contrast Western civil liberties with Communist intolerance through their shaping of liberal asylum law and policy, in such a way as to give special prominence to aid towards victims of political persecution.

Classical ideas have also impinged more directly on modern debates about refugees. The foundational book in the study of ancient Greek refugees, Balogh (1943), was a contribution to developing twentieth-century legal and political discourses about

refugees,¹⁰¹ as well as a scholarly study of the ancient Greek case. The author, Elemér Balogh, a Hungarian refugee scholar of law, legal history and comparative law who spent time teaching in Lithuania, Germany, the USA, Canada, South Africa and Sweden, was a committed advocate of international law and peace built on Classical principles,¹⁰² including in relation to refugees.¹⁰³ His work on ancient Greek refugees adopts a universalist approach, sensitive to the suffering of Balogh's own forerunners as refugees. For Balogh, the most compelling ancient Greek model for the present is Alexander the Great's sweeping 'Exiles' Decree' of 324 BC, ordering the Greek cities to reintegrate almost all their exiles: this is a significant case of a power larger than any single (city-)state seeking to achieve general repatriation.¹⁰⁴

Another Classicist deeply involved in the evolution of modern ideas about refugee aid was Gilbert Murray (1866–1957),¹⁰⁵ Professor of Greek at Glasgow and Oxford. He was very active in the British League of Nations Union from the 1920s onwards, participating in its efforts to draw attention to refugee problems. Together with Lord Cecil, he led a delegation in May 1935 to the British Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, to discuss the refugee problem and the League of Nations.¹⁰⁶ He also sought to draw attention to the Refugee Problem after the Second World War, delivering a BBC broadcast 'Thoughts on Refugees' in October 1956.¹⁰⁷ Murray was also very influential in the campaigns to accommodate refugee scholars in Britain in the 1930s and 1940s, as a prominent member of the Academic Assistance Council (founded in 1933), which became the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning in 1936.¹⁰⁸ This activity was partly born of Murray's longstanding liberal convictions, but, as Oswyn Murray has argued,¹⁰⁹ it might also be seen as a form of 'repentance' for Murray's support of condemnations of German intellectuals in 1914, including in a collective letter to *The Times* supporting the new war, signed by many British academics.¹¹⁰

It is possible to compare Murray's approaches to ancient and modern refugees. In a book of 1913 on Euripides, addressed to a wide readership, Murray discusses Euripides' play, *The Children of Heracles*. Murray concludes that the Athenian aid to mythical refugees in that play reveals Euripides' 'ideal of Athens':

Athens will be true to Hellas and all that Hellas stands for: for law, for the gods of mercy, for the belief in right rather than force. Also, as the king of Athens is careful to observe, for democracy and constitutional government. He is no despot ruling barbarians.¹¹¹

Murray thus summarised different ancient Greek ideals I have discussed, making them plain to a wide twentieth-century readership.¹¹² He later himself applied this approach to the question of modern refugees. In a letter to *The Times*¹¹³ in 1940, calling for better treatment of (certain) German refugees, he adopted very much the approach he had earlier attributed to Euripides. He wrote:

There are now two dangerous cries: one is "intern all Germans", which is already taking the form "intern all foreigners". This is the reaction of the average ignorant and unthinking man, who can see no difference between one German and another, or, if it comes to that, between one foreigner and another. Oppressor and victim, Fascist and anti-Fascist, they are all the same to him.... Surely our greatest asset in the eyes of the world is not merely that we are fighting for a righteous cause, but that we are a decent nation with a high standard of honour.¹¹⁴

This example illustrates my broader argument about the complexity of the Classical inheritance. Murray was one of the leading intellectuals of liberal internationalism in early and mid-twentieth century Britain, and yet his approach to refuge and asylum in public debate includes several Classicising elements which appear a bit out of kilter with liberal internationalism, at least in its post-1945 form: in the full letter, he talks about good and bad Germans,¹¹⁵ or good and bad foreigners, indeed, of ‘recognising friends and enemies’; he disparages ‘barbarians’ and the vagaries of the uneducated mob; and he stresses patriotism, the importance of being a ‘decent nation with a high standard of honour’ (maybe he should have said ‘a decent polis’).¹¹⁶ This demonstrates that Classicising civic republicanism and civic humanism have not always chimed closely with modern liberal humanism, or humanitarianism, though they are very closely linked. Classical particularism and civic patriotism, or even anti-universalism, were very prominent even in the twentieth-century birth throes of modern liberal humanitarianism and United-Nations cosmopolitanism. Modern liberal ideals of asylum and refuge aid have a very complex and conflicting genealogy, including a complex and conflicting Classical dimension.

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² See Balogh (1943); Seibert (1979); McKechnie (1989); Forsdyke (2005); Gaertner (2007); Garland (2014). These works are partly concerned with Greek approaches to, and ideologies concerning, refuge and aid to the displaced; on this issue in particular, see Lonis (1993).

³ Compare Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1155a16–22. For the broader context of such ideas in ancient Greek thought: Baldry (1965).

⁴ For the connection between the virtue of humanity and equality, drawn in a pragmatic, non-theoretical ancient Greek text, see *SEG* 39.1243, col. III, discussed in section 7 of this paper.

⁵ Compare Williams (1993), ch. 5.

⁶ This expression derives ultimately from the Bible: certain books of the Old Testament represent 'cities of refuge', where those who had committed a homicide involuntarily could find refuge from blood vengeance (e.g. *Deuteronomy* 19; *Numbers* 35:24–8). Nonetheless, the ancient Greeks also formulated their own, quite separate concept of a 'polis of refuge' (see Aeschines 3.134, for Classical Athens: ἡ δ' ἡμετέρα πόλις, ἡ κοινὴ καταφυγὴ τῶν Ἑλλήνων); that Greek usage is the inspiration for the use of the phrase here.

⁷ Compare Lambert's paper, this volume, on medieval England.

⁸ I have given more attention to practical details and problems in Gray (2015), ch. 6, but there remains much further research to be done.

⁹ Compare Skinner (1974).

¹⁰ See especially Gatrell's methodological comments; also Lachenicht, Manasek and Glasman.

¹¹ Cf. Zetter (1991) on refugee 'labels'.

¹² See especially sections 5 and 7 below.

¹³ The relationship between tragedy and Athenian ideology has been intensively and revealingly studied: see, for example, Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1973); Goldhill (1987); Loraux (1991); Wilson (2000).

¹⁴ See Gould (1973).

¹⁵ Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women*, ll. 600–624; compare ll. 26–9.

¹⁶ Compare Price (2009), 29–30.

¹⁷ See especially Euripides' *Children of Heracles* (c. 430 BC), ll. 12–38, 236–49.

¹⁸ Compare Xenophon *Hellenica* 2.3.52–3.

¹⁹ Cf. Price (2009), esp. ch. 1.

²⁰ For discussion of the debates, favouring the latter approach: Price (2009), esp. 4–6.

²¹ See Gibney (2004), e.g. 23.

²² See Price (2009), esp. 6.

²³ On the ambiguous role of outsiders and their arrival in the *Suppliant Women*, and links with the fifth-century Athenian context, see recently Bakewell (2013).

²⁴ For an inventory of the known city-states of the Archaic and Classical periods, see Hansen and Nielsen (2004).

²⁵ E.g. Xenophon *Hellenica* 2.4.1; Plutarch *Pelopidas* 6.

²⁶ See, for example, Gauthier (2011).

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- ²⁷ See above all Whitehead (1977).
- ²⁸ For the links between economics and refuge policies, see (e.g.) Heather and Manasek, this volume.
- ²⁹ Compare Heather, this volume, on ‘high-status political refugees’ in the Roman Empire.
- ³⁰ For such documents, from Athens and other cities, see Balogh (1943), 41–52; Lonis (1993). I have analysed these documents and their context in more depth in Gray (2015), chapter 6.2.3.
- ³¹ Rhodes and Osborne (2003), no. 77; *IG II/III*³ 316.
- ³² For broad notions of refugee ‘protection’ in the modern world, see Glasman, this volume (on Central Africa).
- ³³ See above all Rigsby (1997).
- ³⁴ Price (2009), 26–31, by contrast, argues that asylum in this technical sense was itself a deeply political matter in ancient Greece: in Price’s view, cities or their magistrates or priests frequently made decisions about whether to accept asylum-seekers, with grave implications for their city’s relationship with the asylum-seekers’ home state (cf. Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women*). Priests and other authorities may well sometimes have scrutinised claims to asylum, with the power to reject those whose case they judged unjust (cf. Price (2009), 27–8). This phenomenon is, however, not very well documented operating in practice (for the evidence situation, see Rigsby (1997), 10). In any case, such authorities’ role would simply have been to determine the gods’ will. Political powers, such as civic assemblies, could not make any decision other than to respect claims to asylum in legitimate sacred places without offending the gods. Compare Xenophon *Hellenica* 2.3.52–3: the speaker, Theramenes, claims asylum at an altar, and implies that the inevitable decision of the incumbent Athenian regime, the oligarchic Thirty, to disregard his claim will expose their impiety towards the gods. In so far as the protection of the altar is conditional, it is conditional on the god’s favour, rather than any human judgement (compare Price’s examples from the orator Lycurgus: Price (2009), 27). At least at the level of ideology, asylum at an altar was usually open to all, including those acknowledged to be criminals, regardless of the severity of their crime: all could opt to face divine rather than human justice. Precisely the unconditional character of the system could be held to leave it open to serious abuse, and to undermine public order (see especially Tacitus *Annals* 3.60).
- ³⁵ See Thucydides 3.75.3–5; Xenophon *Hellenica* 2.3.52–3.
- ³⁶ I therefore agree with this broad conclusion of Price’s argument, which suggests that many ancient Greek practices prefigure the prominent modern Western conception of asylum as a distinctively political matter, which flourished in the Cold-War era; cf. Price (2009), 26–31 (compare n. 34 above). Importantly, however, unlike Price, I locate the ancient Greek forerunners of this modern approach, not in ancient Greek approaches to technical *asylia*, but in ancient Greek cities’ approaches to the broader question of whether to help the displaced.
- ³⁷ See recently Balot (2009); Azoulay (2014).
- ³⁸ Compare recently Harris (2013), on standards of truly political deliberation.
- ³⁹ See Low (2007), with much further bibliography.
- ⁴⁰ Cf. Williams (1993).
- ⁴¹ Compare (for example) Ober (1989); Christ (2006); Herman (2006).
- ⁴² On the modern persistence of these tensions, see Gibney (2004), esp. ch. 7.
- ⁴³ For a similar picture of Euripides’ political plays, see Mendelsohn (2002).
- ⁴⁴ Some historians have recently played down the importance of status distinctions in ancient Greek society (e.g. Cohen (2000), Vlassopoulos (2007), Osborne (2011)). These views are a helpful corrective to interpretations at the other extreme, but it is hard to deny that issues of legal and social status played a fundamental role in Greek civic life (cf. Kamen (2013)).
- ⁴⁵ See Gray (2015), ch. 3, collecting earlier bibliography.
- ⁴⁶ Demosthenes 20.51–64.
- ⁴⁷ Demosthenes 20.61–2.
- ⁴⁸ For such reciprocity, see Plutarch *Pelopidas* 6 (Athens and Thebes); perhaps compare *I.Sinope* 1 (mutual agreement between the cities of Sinope and Herakleia Pontica to host each other’s exiles).
- ⁴⁹ For modern parallels, see Price (2009), ch. 2.
- ⁵⁰ Compare Forsdyke (2005), esp. 230–2, 234–9.
- ⁵¹ Christ (2012), 168–9, with n. 93; on the aid to the refugees, compare Osborne (1981–1983), vol. III, 125–6.

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- ⁵² See, for example, Xenophon *Hellenica* 2.2.9.
- ⁵³ *IG XII 6 1* 17–41.
- ⁵⁴ Cf. Gibney (2004), chs. 1–2.
- ⁵⁵ Lysias 2.11–12; cf. Low (2007), 178–81.
- ⁵⁶ See Isocrates 4.51–2; compare 8.30. On this type of Athenian rhetoric: Low (2007), 177–86.
- ⁵⁷ Compare Aeschines 3.134.
- ⁵⁸ Isocrates 14.2, 52–3, 56.
- ⁵⁹ See again Isocrates 4.51–2.
- ⁶⁰ Isocrates 12.91–4; cf. Forsdyke (2005), 231–2.
- ⁶¹ On the prominence of varied types of substantial, particularist relationship between cities in Greek interstate relations and rhetoric more widely, see Low (2007), esp. 36–61.
- ⁶² E.g. Isocrates 14.2, 51–2, with Low (2007), 74–6.
- ⁶³ Isocrates 14.1–2 and 56–7.
- ⁶⁴ This is made explicit in *IG II²* 33 (for Thasian exiles).
- ⁶⁵ See Mack (2015), 116, discussing in particular *IG II²* 33.
- ⁶⁶ See Forsdyke (2005), ch. 5; cf. Low (2007), ch. 5, esp. 199–210; Ma, Papazarkardas and Parker (2008).
- ⁶⁷ See especially Euripides’ *The Children of Heracles*.
- ⁶⁸ For an example from an Athenian speech, compare, for example, the appeal for special consideration for the elderly and children among the Plataean refugees at Isocrates 14.48, 56. Isocrates’ Plataeans appeal in that speech for generosity towards their whole community, but lay special stress in those chapters on the pitiable suffering of the very old and very young.
- ⁶⁹ See (e.g.) Loraux (1993).
- ⁷⁰ Compare Aeschines 2.142: fourth-century Boeotian exiles in Athens *elect* advocates for Aeschines.
- ⁷¹ Compare Luraghi (2008), 188–94.
- ⁷² For this phenomenon: Seibert (1979), 312–14; Gehrke (1985), 224–9; Gray (2015), chapter 6.3 and 6.5.
- ⁷³ Lysias 23.6.
- ⁷⁴ See Gatrell (2013); also Gatrell’s and Lachenicht’s contributions to this volume.
- ⁷⁵ See Vlassopoulos (2007), esp. ch. 6; Ismard (2010).
- ⁷⁶ For a fuller development of this argument, see Gray (2015), ch. 6.
- ⁷⁷ Compare, for the modern world, some aspects of Agamben (1998).
- ⁷⁸ Diogenes Laertius 6.20–1.
- ⁷⁹ Compare Diogenes Laertius 6.93.
- ⁸⁰ See esp. Diogenes Laertius 6.49, 63; also recently Murray (2004) and Richter (2011), developing ideas of Baldry (1965).
- ⁸¹ Diogenes Laertius 6.93.
- ⁸² See, for example, Gauthier (1985); also recently Mann and Scholz (2011), citing much earlier bibliography.
- ⁸³ See especially Schofield (1999), on developing Stoic cosmopolitanism.
- ⁸⁴ See, for example, Grieb (2008), arguing for early Hellenistic continuities in civic practices, and a sharp break in c. 150 BC.
- ⁸⁵ I have argued this more fully in Gray (2013). On changing Hellenistic ethics, compare de Romilly (1979); Konstan (2001). On the changes to polis life in the later Hellenistic world, see recently the papers in Fröhlich and Müller (2005).
- ⁸⁶ Some Hellenistic civic rhetoric recognised this: see, for example, *I.Priene²* 69, revised edition of *I.Priene* 113, ll. 53–60, discussed below.
- ⁸⁷ *IPArk* 18, ll. 2–18 (c. 189 BC).
- ⁸⁸ Compare the representation of displaced people given refuge in another Hellenistic inscription, *SEG* 53.1229, ll. 11–14 (reception of refugees from Alabanda in Stratonikeia, two cities in south-western Asia Minor). For further discussion, see Gray (2015), 334–9.
- ⁸⁹ *SEG* 39.1243, col. III, ll. 25–35, 47–58; cf. Robert and Robert (1989), esp. 42–3.
- ⁹⁰ *SEG* 18.143, ll. 47–59, esp. ll. 58–9.
- ⁹¹ See, for example, Brown (2012), esp. ch. 3.

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- ⁹² Compare Heather, this volume, on Themistius.
- ⁹³ For the prominent view that the Greek cities came under the control of a narrowing, paternalistic elite after c. 150 BC, see Gauthier (1985). Compare recently Mann and Scholz (2011) and Müller (2014), which survey the current state of the debate.
- ⁹⁴ *SEG* 39.1243, col. III, ll. 35–8.
- ⁹⁵ Compare Hamon (2011).
- ⁹⁶ *I.Priene*² 69, revised edition of *I.Priene* 113, ll. 53–60; compare Hamon (2011), esp. 70–2.
- ⁹⁷ See, for example, the prominent recent approaches to asylum among theorists discussed in Price (2009), 4–5.
- ⁹⁸ Compare Heather, this volume, on the Roman Empire.
- ⁹⁹ See, for example, Douzinas (2007); Moyn (2012).
- ¹⁰⁰ Compare the similar argument about modern liberal ideas about expulsion and deportation in Gray (2011).
- ¹⁰¹ Cf. Balogh's own rationale, p. xv.
- ¹⁰² Hamza (2008).
- ¹⁰³ Cf. Balogh (1949).
- ¹⁰⁴ Balogh (1943), 81–2.
- ¹⁰⁵ For a French case, compare J.-P. Vernant, a leading post-WWII French scholar of ancient Greek culture and politics, who emphasised the role of persuasion and equality within Greek thinking (see, e.g., Vernant (1962)). He was also a prominent internationalist intellectual of the French Left. His brother, Jacques, was the author of one of the major works on the post-war refugee issue: Vernant (1953).
- ¹⁰⁶ See *The Times* 18.5.1935, p. 8. On Murray's internationalism: Ceadel (2007); Stapleton (2007); Wilson (2007).
- ¹⁰⁷ Morris (2007), 309.
- ¹⁰⁸ Murray was one of the forty-one signatories of the founding statement of the Academic Assistance Council (see *The Times*, 24.5.1933, p. 10), alongside other Classical scholars (A.E. Housman and F.G. Kenyon); he also subsequently served on its council and contributed to appeals for aid for refugee scholars (see, e.g., *The Times*, 15.3.1935, p. 12; 10.2.1936, p. 19). Compare recently Tony Harrison's play *Fram* (2008), portraying the roles of Murray and F. Nansen in interwar refugee politics.
- ¹⁰⁹ Murray (2011).
- ¹¹⁰ 18.5.1914, p. 3.
- ¹¹¹ Murray (1913), 91–2.
- ¹¹² This is only one of several points of contact between Classicists' ideas and the development of twentieth-century internationalism and International Relations theory, involving figures such as A.E. Zimmern and A. Momigliano: see Low (2007), ch. 1, esp. 17–18; Murray (2010).
- ¹¹³ On Murray's frequent letters to *The Times*, see Bruneau and Wodell (2007), esp. 324.
- ¹¹⁴ See *The Times* 8.7.1940, p. 5.
- ¹¹⁵ Contrast the quite sweeping criticisms of German views in the collective letter of 18.9.1914, signed by Murray himself, discussed in Murray (2011).
- ¹¹⁶ Contrast the more neutral and depoliticised language of the founding statement of the Academic Assistance Council (see *The Times*, 24.5.1933, p. 10; compare *The Times*' own editorial on p. 17 of the same edition).